DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 371 236 CE 066 776

AUTHOR	Drennon, Cassandra E.
TITLE	Inquiry and Action: A Plan for Adult Education Staff and Professional Development in Virginia. Revised.
INSTITUTION	Virginia Commonwealth Univ., Richmond.
SPONS AGENCY	Virginia State Dept. of Education, Richmond. Office of Adult Education.
PUB DATE	Jun 94
NOTE	41p.; For a related document, see CE 066 777.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; Adult Educators; *Adult Literacy; *Educational History; *Educational Philosophy; Inservice Teacher Education; *Literacy Education; *Professional Development; *Program Development; State Programs
IDENTIFIERS	353 Project; *Virginia

ABSTRACT

This report presents a conceptual and structural framework for adult education staff development in Virginia. It recommends to Virginia adult educators and policymakers a set of structures to support staff development activities and then offers a philosophy to guide activities within those structures. The report first traces 2 years of a staff development study conducted in Virginia, beginning in July 1991. Profiled are the various support mechanisms proposed and the guiding philosophy of inquiry-based staff development. Additionally, the report poses challenges to all stakeholders in the adult education system, from adult students to policymakers, which would cause a fundamental shift in the approach to staff development. Following the initial inquiry, four action steps are offered: (1) implementing a new system for staff development (advisory boards, state staff development specialist, new practitioner training, learning plans, local support for learning plans, regional enters and workshops, a statewide newsletter, electronic links, a state resource center, summer institutes, a management development institute, and intensive topic institutes); (2) incorporating a philosophy (inquiry-based staff development described versus an expert-directed system); (3) involving others (partnerships, networking, and coalition building); and (4) choices and challenges to adult students and to teachers, aides, volunteers, and General Educational Development test examiners. Three references and the names and addresses of the staff development management planning team are included. (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 371 236

Inquiry and Action:

A PLAN FOR ADULT EDUCATION STAFF AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN VIRGINIA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L. McClendon

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

VIRGINIA ADULT EDUCATION
CENTERS FOR PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

CE 066 776

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Inquiry and Action: A Plan for Adult Education Staff and Professional Development in Virginia

Prepared by
Cassandra E. Drennon
Adult Education Centers for Professional Development
Virginia Commonwealth University
June 1993
Revised June 1994

This project was funded under Section 353 of the Adult Education Act, Title VI, P.L. 93-380 and amendments as administered through the Adult Education Office, Department of Education, Commonwealth of Virginia. The activity which is the subject of this document is supported in whole or part by the U.S. Department of Education. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education should be inferred.

Acknowledgments

Designing a new staff development system for adult educators has been a deeply collaborative effort. First and foremost, the team of thirty practitioners who crafted the new staff development system are to be commended. Over the course of a year, they worked steadily, combining knowledge gained from literature and research with the truths of their own experience. The project required them make difficult decisions which were certain to significantly influence adult education in Virginia.

Program administrators, school superintendents, and others provided essential support for the work. They released Planning Team members from their routines to attend intensive work sessions throughout the year. They also enabled the many surveys, focus groups, staff meetings, and other special events initiated by team members as they sought input from colleagues.

The teachers, volunteers, aides, administrators and Regional Specialists from whom team members learned so much deserve special thanks. They openly shared experiences and insights which remain as the heart of this work.

There are others who contributed to our work in important ways. We are grateful to Susan Lytle and her colleagues at the National Center on Adult Literacy. Inquiry-based staff development has been eloquently explained to us through their work, and their thinking provided the germinating seeds for much of our own. Diane Foucar-Szocki brilliantly facilitated development and refinement of the planning team's collective vision. At critical junctures we turned to Hanna Fingeret for direction and advice. Hanna helped us to discover and amplify our own voices during these times and consequently to grow in confidence. Judy Taylor superbly managed the retreat logistics and competently handled numerous other tasks vital for the project's success. Lennox McLendon's leadership, optimism, and clarity of vision sustained the team's work through many an upheaval and for that we are especially grateful.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements i

Introduction ii

1. Some History

The Staff Development Tradition 1

The 1991 Statewide Evaluation of Staff Development 2

Some Findings from the Fingeret and Cockley Study 3

Recommendations from Fingeret and Cockley 4

2. Inquiry: Rethinking Staff Development

Forming the Staff Devlopment Planning Team 6

Considering What We Know 7

Building on What We Know 9

3. Action: Implementing a New System for Staff Development in Virginia

Practitioners Advisory Boards 13

State-Level Staff Development Specialist 13

New Practitioner Training 13

Learning Plans 14

Local Support for Learning Plans 15

Regional Professional Development Centers 16

Regional Workshops 17

Adult Educators' Research Network 18

Statewide Newsletter 18

Electronic Communication Link 19

State Resource Center 19

Summer Institutes 20

Management Development Institute 21
Intensive Topic Institutes 21

4. Action: Incorporating a Philosophy
Inquiry-Based Staff Development 22

5. Action: Involving Others
Partnerships, Networking, and Coalition Building 27

6. Action: Choices and Challenges 29

References 31

Appendix
A. Staff Development Planning Team

Introduction

This report lays forth a conceptual and structural framework for adult education staff development in Virginia. It recommends to Virginia adult educators and policymakers a set of structures to support staff development activities and then offers a philosophy to consistently guide activities within those structures. An Implementation Guide accompanies this report to assist administrators and staff development facilitators in carrying out the proposed plan for staff development. More than establishing policy, the report offers a vision for adult educators which, if brought to fruition, may enormously enhance Virginia's effectiveness in serving adult learners.

This report traces two years of staff development study conducted in Virginia; it begins in July 1991 with the statewide evaluation of staff development and carries through May 1993 to the conclusion of the formal design work by the Staff Development Planning Team. Readers will be introduced to the various support mechanisms proposed and to the guiding philosophy of inquiry-based staff development. Additionally, the report poses challenges to each stakeholder in the adult education system, from adult students to policymakers, which if met allow for a successful and fundamental shift to occur in the way we approach staff development. The accompanying Implementation Guide includes tools and resources for effectively integrating *inquiry* and *action* into the culture of the adult education workplace.

We use the term "practitioner" throughout this report. It refers not only to ABE and ESL teachers, but to classroom aides, volunteer tutors, GED examiners, program administrators, specialists, and planners. The proposed staff development system has been designed to effectively meet the needs for knowledge and skill development of *all* adult education personnel, regardless of role.

The plan for staff development presented in this report has been firmly grounded in both academic theory and practitioner experience. Implementation of the staff development system proposed herein, however, goes far beyond the simple revamping of structures, policies, or procedures. Successful system-wide implementation requires that individuals commit to values, beliefs, and

behaviors which consistently honor the vitality of practitioners and adult students as knowledge makers within the system.

Inquiry-based staff development invites practitioners to critically examine adult education issues through systematic inquiry into daily practice. The approach is lauded for the potential it carries to generate important new knowledge for the larger adult education field. In keeping with the philosophy and methods of inquiry, we now turn to practitioners themselves to generate new knowledge about its ultimate viability as an approach to staff development.

1. Some History

The Staff Development Tradition

Traditionally, staff development has been viewed largely as a remediation process. Gaps in practitioners' knowledge and skills are identified and experts are called upon to help fill the perceived gaps (Fingeret and Cockley, 1992; Lytle and Cochran-Smith, 1991 as cited by Fingeret and Cockley, 1992). Nationwide, single-session workshops have been the chosen staff development method among adult basic education programs (Pelavin and Associates, 1992).

As part-time workers by and large, many adult literacy educators must balance competing professional commitments. Many work in isolation from colleagues as well as from the larger field of adult education. According to Lytle, Belzer and Reumann (1992), these same workers are often **presumed**

- to have little time available for adult education professional development activities, and
- to have little formal preparation for their role as adult educators.

In some sense, workshops have been responsive to these presumptions. In many cases, a few paid hours for workshop attendance are built into a practitioner's annual schedule. Workshop presenters are often university-based experts to whom practitioners may not otherwise be exposed due to what is perceived as a lack of preparatory training. Additionally, workshops enable practitioners to come together periodically to engage in informal sharing and receive support, thus reducing some of the isolation many experience.

The merit of workshops is apparent in this light. However, when we critically examine the attitudes, assumptions and beliefs embedded in our traditional staff development methods and relate these to what we know about *ourselves* as adult learners we are led to approaches even more promising.

A 1991 evaluation of staff development activities influenced the Office of Adult Education, along with scores of adult educators throughout the Commonwealth, to engage in this critical examination.

The 1991 Statewide Evaluation of Staff Development

(Pages 2-4 include excerpts from Teachers' Learning: An Evaluation of ABE Staff Development in Virginia by Hanna Fingeret and Suzanne Cockley, 1992. The full report may be obtained from the Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Resource Center.)

In Virginia, training and support structures are in place to help practitioners improve their knowledge and skills. These include

- regional training workshops
- a centralized resource center
- a statewide newsletter
- regionalized summer conferences.

In 1991, Dr. Hanna Fingeret of Literacy South and Suzanne Cockley of the Virginia Adult Educators' Research Network conducted an extensive statewide evaluation of staff development in Virginia. Using a qualitative research design, Fingeret and Cockley gathered data from practitioners through personal interviews, surveys, and focus groups. **The purpose of their study was to identify the extent to which practitioners' needs for knowledge and skill development were being met by the staff development mechanisms in Virginia.** In examining this question they also explored other issues:

- the extent to which a coherent, critical perspective was informing staff development in Virginia
- the extent to which staff development was viewed as an ongoing process
- the extent to which practitioners were being helped to build a sense of belonging to a community
- the extent to which there was a focus on program improvement rather than on individual change
- the extent to which administrators were involved in staff development

Some findings from the Fingeret and Cockley report are listed on the following page.

Some Findings from the Fingeret and Cockley Study

✓ Teachers who have experience in public school classrooms say they transfer this knowledge to their work in adult classrooms.

✓ Some teachers report that they learn from their students. Some teachers learn from other people in their classrooms. For example, teachers who use aides or volunteers describe learning from them. Many teachers and volunteers use their personal relationships and prior personal experiences to help them gain insight into how their students learn. A few teachers turn to the professional literature for help developing their teaching skills.

✓ The administrators [with whom we talked] see themselves in a way that is consistent with how the teachers see them -- as responsible for creating a climate, providing resources, developing incentives for participation, and disseminating information about staff development opportunities.

✓ Almost all teachers recall instances where observing and talking with other teachers gave them insights into solutions for their own classroom problems.

✓ Many teachers talk about the value of their work based on their own experiences with adult students and contrast this with their perceived low status as adult education teachers.

✓ Teachers consistently report that they need to feel a part of the statewide community of Adult Education, to be connected to other teachers and administrators, to be kept informed about what is happening at the state level, and to receive guidance on philosophy and program direction.

✓ Many teachers express a desire to be a part of a more coherent system, and for their own learning to be part of a coherent plan. This goes beyond simply knowing what is happening administratively on different levels, to a need for a statewide "community" of adult educators that includes people at all levels in the system and a sense of shared goals, philosophy, and values.

Recommendations from Fingeret and Cockley

As Fingeret and Cockley analyzed the data they collected from Virginia Adult Educators, they realized that teachers were placing participation in staff development activities in the framework of the ways they construct *their own learning.* They searched for a theoretical model that would help them present these ideas and determined that **inquiry-based staff development incorporates the ideas and experiences shared by Virginia's adult education practitioners in this study.** Inquiry-based staff development is also consistent with Virginia's commitment to responsive adult education.

Fingeret and Cockley proposed a model of staff development centered upon practitioners' questions in relation to practice, and recommended that all staff development activities be conducted in ways consistent with the following premises:

- Teachers' knowledge is valued.
- Teachers are helped to use what they know to continue learning.
- Activities, attitudes, structures and values support building a community of teachers as well as a community of teachers and learners.
- There is a focus on program improvement as well as individual change. This means that the inter-relatedness of effective management techniques, student retention, student achievement, improved teaching techniques, teacher satisfaction, improved status for adult education, and staff development is stressed throughout all aspects of adult education, including the planning of staff development.
- Staff development is viewed as a continuing process involving administrators as well as teachers.

Recommendations from Fingeret and Cockley *(continued)*

In short, Fingeret and Cockley were suggesting a practitioner-centered staff development system rather than one that was primarily dependent upon outside experts. The next step for the Office of Adult Education was to contract with 30 practitioner consultants to study the staff development evaluation report. As a result of practitioner synthesis of inquiry-based theory and their own experience, the working group of practitioner consultants would be convened to design a comprehensive staff development system for adult educators consistent with the Fingeret and Cockley recommendations.

2. *Inquiry: Rethinking Staff Development*

Forming the Staff Development Planning Team

In the summer of 1992, the Office of Adult Education invited all adult education practitioners to apply for one of 30 positions on the Staff Development Planning Team. Applicants provided demographic information, professional references, and a writing sample in which they talked about why they were motivated to participate on the team.

Team members possessing strong leadership qualities and credibility among their peers were sought. Membership on the team needed to represent the diversity among adult educators, programs, and geographical settings within Virginia. Also, the team needed to be comprised of individuals with varying degrees of adult education experience working in a variety of roles: teachers, volunteers, administrators, regional specialists, program planners, state office staff, staff developers and academicians.

The selected practitioners entered into a one-year consulting agreement with the Office of Adult Education. **Members of the Staff Development Planning Team were expected to meet three times during the year for intensive retreats. Between retreats they were to**

- generate input on staff development issues from colleagues in their local area.
- review staff development literature and research.
- keep a journal of their personal insights and their recommendations.
- write papers on staff development issues and prepare presentations which would be shared during the retreats.

As a result of this work, the Staff Development Planning Team was to achieve two major goals. These were

- to create awareness and readiness for change among all adult educators in the state while involving input from as many as possible, and
- to design a comprehensive, cohesive, practitioner-centered staff development system for Virginia adult educators.

Considering What We Know

The knowledge and experience that practitioners bring to the profession is the foundation of an inquiry-based system. Therefore, the Staff Development Planning Team began their work in the fall of 1992 by making explicit what they knew to be true about *their own learning, based on their real experiences.*

After examining their collective experience, the team generally agreed that **the following knowledge should guide all other decisions about a staff development system:**

- ✓ We learn by collaborating with others.
- ✓ We learn by participating actively.
- ✓ The learning process includes a reflective phase.
- ✓ Feedback from others is reinforcing and provides a "reality check."
- ✓ We are goal oriented learners. We can determine our own goals or we can respond to program goals.
- ✓ We learn by doing, by hands-on experience, and practice.
- ✓ We are self-motivated when there is high interest, enjoyment, fascination, and curiosity involved.
- ✓ Learning is a mutual experience.
- ✓ Observation and modeling are powerful learning tools.
- ✓ Learning must be placed in the meaningful, relevant context of our experience.
- ✓ There are diverse ways to learn.
- ✓ We need to feel psychologically safe when we learn.

Considering What We Know *(continued)*

Planning Team members then began to envision an **"ideal"** staff development system -- one that would embody the ideas which had been resonating throughout the discussions about professional learning. A number of themes consistently emerged and, as a result, they determined that an ideal staff development system should have the following characteristics:

- Decisions about staff development are made within the context of larger program goals.
- Practitioners have freedom to choose what and how they will learn based on issues that are meaningful for their practice.
- Staff development is an ongoing *process.*
- Practitioners represent the center of a staff development system with opportunities being accessible to all.
- People and services are interconnected. A network of services exists which has the effect of linking practitioners with one another.
- There are incentives in place for practitioners to involve themselves in staff development activities.
- A variety of learning options are afforded through the system.
- Staff development opportunities encourage and support collaboration among practitioners in all roles.
- Practitioners actively plan, implement, and evaluate all phases of staff development within the system.
- Information is easily and effectively communicated within the system.
- Practitioners generate new knowledge within the system. Knowledge is not simply delivered.
- The staff development system includes safe environments for risk taking.

By making these conditions explicit, the planning team had set forth some criteria for evaluating their system in the future.

Building on What We Know

After formulating their vision for an effective staff development system, the Planning Team members took their ideas back to colleagues for reactions and further input. Over a three-month period, they employed an array of strategies to **inform and involve as many practitioners as possible in the thinking process.**

The second phase of the planning process required each team member to draft a model, from their own perspective, of a staff development system that could effectively meet practitioners' needs for knowledge and skill development. Each proposed system also needed to respond qualitatively to the team's collective vision. (A "system" was defined as the network of services, programs, projects, or individuals that would provide or support staff development opportunities. The term "model" referred to a sketch, diagram, or other depiction of their proposed system.) To accomplish this task, **Planning Team members drew upon their knowledge of staff development gained**

- from studying the statewide staff development evaluation report
- from reading a number of theoretical pieces written by leading staff development researchers
- from reflecting on their own experience, and
- from exploring staff development issues with colleagues.

At the second retreat, team members presented their models. Ultimately, these 30 models had to be compressed into one that would best serve the staff development needs of all adult educators. **The team's approach to this task included looking not only for the recurring ideas but also for the innovative and the progressive** -- ideas offered by even just one visionary practitioner which could potentially alter significantly the ways we approach our professional development.

Building On What We Know *(continued)*

While negotiating among the various proposed staff development systems, **we were struck by the consistency of some particular suggestions.** Using practitioner-designed learning plans to frame professional development activities was an idea that occurred throughout most of the systems. Using technology to link practitioners and programs was suggested by most everyone.

Also, the systems consistently reflected a shift in how staff development activities were supported. Specifically, everyone recognized the value of staff development organized on the state and regional levels -- the Resource Center, Cluster Training, the summer conferences, and the newsletter. Most, however, recommended that *primary* support for professional development occur locally.

After much negotiation the Staff Development Planning Team reached consensus. They recommended to the Office of Adult Education that **the following components of a staff development system have the greatest potential of meeting the learning needs of adult educators in Virginia:**

- practitioner advisory boards
- state-level staff development specialist
- new practitioner training
- learning plans for all practitioners
- local support for learning plan activities
- regional professional development centers
- regional workshops *
- Research Network *
- statewide newsletter *
- electronic communication link among practitioners and programs
- state resource center with on-line access
- summer institutes
- management institute for administrators **

Building on What We Know *(continued)*

- intensive topical institutes modeling the National Writing Project
- colleges and universities
- professional organizations

** The Planning Team considered whether or not these activities might more effectively serve practitioners if they were organized regionally rather than on the state-level. Until regional professional development centers become a reality, they suggested maintaining the current structures.*

*** Planning for a Management Development Institute is occurring simultaneously by a team of program administrators. The MDI represents a promising addition to the network of staff development opportunities and is therefore included here with the planning team's recommendations.*

In the final phase of their work, the Planning Team began to explore the implications of their ideas. Numerous questions arose, including, "What should be the content of new practitioner training? *Who* should decide what new practitioners need to know? What kind of support do practitioners need to be successful with learning plans? What kinds of activities should go on in a regional Professional Development Center? How should these be funded and staffed? What does a summer conference look like in an inquiry based system?"

The planning team members organized themselves into investigation teams. **Then they developed action plans for researching these and other issues over the next three months.** Their strategies included:

- examining project reports from other state adult education programs
- interviewing practitioners in other states who had relevant experiences to share
- consulting academicians and other researchers who were interested in the same issues
- reviewing the current literature and research on these topics
- studying how other professions such as health care, social services and business approached these same issues.

Building On What We Know *(continued)*

The investigation teams considered the broad base of information they accumulated. They wrote papers collaboratively and presented these to the state office staff at their third retreat in the spring of 1993. The papers and presentations included **specific and practical recommendations for implementing their proposed staff development plan.** The formal planning process concluded, these documents provide a continuing resource for state decision-makers.

In the following section of this report, each component of the proposed staff development system is described in some detail. Progress towards implementing the ideas, as of July 1, 1994, is noted in italicized text.

3. Action: Implementing a New System for Staff Development in Virginia

Practitioner Advisory Boards

Practitioners advise state, regional, and local planners of staff development activities. Advisors help planners of staff development activities arrive at decisions which will effectively meet practitioner needs. In some cases they may conduct evaluation activities or become involved in the actual implementation of project activities.

Each 353-funded staff development project in Virginia is currently guided by a representative advisory committee of adult education practitioners.

State-Level Staff Development Specialist

The Specialist directs the daily operation of the Centers for Professional Development, facilitates communication and collaboration among the various staff development projects operating throughout Virginia, engages in long-range planning, and compiles and reports evaluation data and suggests modifications to the system when appropriate. Additionally, the Specialist keeps abreast of current staff development theory, research, and national trends.

This position has been in place since July 1992. The Specialist position is currently funded through a 353 special projects grant housed at Virginia Commonwealth University. As a staff person with the Centers for Professional Development, the Specialist works closely with the Office of Adult Education, Virginia Department of Education, and the Virginia Council for Adult Education and Literacy. The Centers for Professional Development provide technical and financial support for learning plan activities and regional workshops. They also coordinate the development of new practitioner training and house the Office of Training for Volunteer Literacy Providers.

New Practitioner Training

The Staff Development Planning Team recommends that all adult literacy educators participate in some form of consistent preservice training. The training might address the core of

knowledge, skills, and competencies that are relevant to adult literacy educators across contexts -- including development of a personal adult education philosophy, orientation to the mission of adult education in Virginia, planning for ongoing professional development, adult learner characteristics, and other adult education topics. The team suggests that this phase of training be delivered periodically at various locations throughout Virginia. Because of the diversity in knowledge, skills, and competencies required by various programs throughout the state, a second phase of training would need to be negotiated between the new practitioner and an administrator (or designee) of the employing program. Individual professional development plans incorporating a variety of learning strategies would guide the new practitioner's learning. Learning strategies may include workshops, mentoring, peer coaching, professional reading, video, teleconferencing, and more. The team suggests that such training be completed in a specified period of time in order to maintain employment.

A coordinator for the new practitioner training has been hired as of July 1, 1993 through the Adult Education Centers for Professional Development. The coordinator will work with an advisory group and the State Office of Adult Education to further conceptualize, develop, and field test the content, delivery methods, and policies and procedures for new practitioner training. Implementation is targeted for phase-in during 1994-1995.

Learning Plans

Learning plans are used to capture the inquiry activities of both new and experienced practitioners. The Centers for Professional Development have designed forms and processes to facilitate the development of learning plans. Phases of the inquiry process articulated through learning plans include the following: 1) Reflecting on practice and identifying a problem, issue, questions, or concern. 2) Gathering information through observation, study groups, interviews, study of records including student work, test scores, lesson plans, etc., case studies, video and audio recordings of classroom life, professional reading, workshops and conferences, and more. 3) Studying the information gathered. Explaining, interpreting, or critiquing the information. 4) Planning some action to be taken such as a new approach, strategy, or other intervention. 5) Implementing the action. 6) Monitoring and evaluating the changes that occur and judging the quality of the changes.

6) Sharing one's learning with others through informal sharing sessions, workshops, writing or publishing.

Administrators sign off on plans as an indication of commitment to the practitioners' growth and to follow up on plans throughout the year. Learning becomes an ongoing process; when projects are completed, new plans for inquiry and action are formulated. Plans can be modified at any time. Learning plans afford practitioners freedom to learn in ways that are most productive and meaningful for them. Also, learning plans create a means for practitioners to draw attention to critical issues in adult education practice and to contribute to the knowledge base surrounding those issues.

Funding from a 353 Special Projects grant has been set aside at the Centers for Professional Development to reimburse practitioners for expenses that arise from their learning plans. After designing learning plans, peer groups within a program negotiate how funds allocated to that group could best be spent. Reimbursable expenses include mileage to visit other program sites, books and other materials for study groups, fees for workshops not funded through the Department of Education, and materials and supplies for projects related to professional development. A copy of all learning plans are filed with administrators and with the Centers for Professional Development. In turn, the Centers will offer material and human resources and support, administer reimbursements, encourage networking throughout the state among practitioners with similar learning goals, and inform other staff development projects of the type of learning projects being undertaken. Information gleaned from learning plans will assist planners of summer institutes, the Resource Center staff, and others to respond effectively to practitioner needs.

Local Support for Learning Plans

If learning plans are to be successfully implemented, practitioner-learners must have effective support within their work environments. Program administrators ultimately must be responsible for assuring this support although they may choose to delegate these functions to a "staff development facilitator." Staff development facilitators may be regional specialists, lead teachers, or volunteers working within the local program. Administrators or staff development facilitators are responsible for promoting the learning plan approach within a program, orienting practitioners to the staff development system, providing a process for persons to develop their learning plans, reviewing plans to see that they are complete,

recommending learning resources, meeting regularly with learners to review progress, share ideas, and motivate. The administrator plays an important role in providing a programmatic context in which practitioners can develop their own learning plans.

The Centers for Professional Development offer a 3-day training session for staff development facilitators in June of each year. The training addresses the philosophy of inquiry-based staff development and introduces all the necessary forms, processes, and procedures for effective implementation. In order to be eligible for reimbursement for learning plan activities, local staff development facilitators must submit copies of all learning plans (preferably within 30 days of their development) to the Centers for Professional Development.

Regional Professional Development Centers

Regional professional development centers can promote collaboration among practitioners, enhance support, diminish isolation, and increase the available options for professional learning. Regional professional development centers can

- serve as sites for professional development activities as well as provide a base of operations for a "roving" staff developer;
- provide a meeting place and centralized training site;
- house limited resource materials; and
- serve as a satellite of the state Resource Center.

Staff developers working out of regional professional development centers might provide the following services to Virginia's practitioners:

- assist practitioners in developing individual learning plans
- link practitioners with similar learning interests.
- provide information to a statewide electronic bulletin board
- organize and deliver regional workshops
- provide training and technical assistance for mentors and peer coaches.
- produce a regional newsletter
- organize teleconferences

- develop and encourage teacher trainers
- promote study groups and teacher sharing sessions
- provide assistance to practitioners pursuing action research projects
- publicize staff development opportunities
- and publish practitioner research results and other project outcomes.

Establishment of Regional Professional Development Centers was a strong and consistent recommendation from the staff development planning team.

Regional professional development centers have tremendous potential for enhancing learning among Virginia adult educators. Unfortunately, current 353 funding is not sufficient to establish or maintain the Centers in the foreseeable future. Efforts are underway to explore every possible funding alternative. The functions envisioned for regional professional development centers need not be abandoned while funding is acquired. To the extent possible, the functions are temporarily disbursed among the other staff development mechanisms.

Regional Workshops

Regional specialists or administrators coordinate and promote workshops based on the expressed needs of practitioner groups in a particular area. Any practitioner may attend the workshops offered in his or her region. Individuals who use learning plans to guide their professional development may opt to attend relevant workshops outside of their region and be reimbursed for their travel expenses through the Centers for Professional Development.

Regional workshops are funded by the Centers for Professional Development. A separate ESL Cluster Training Project in Arlington, VA provides training for ESL teachers locally and at selected sites throughout Virginia. The Office of Training for Volunteer Literacy Providers also coordinates and funds workshops for non-profit organizations involved in literacy.

The Adult Educators' Research Network

The Network promotes action research and supports practitioner researchers through staff development. The Network provides stipends for practitioners and fellowships for graduate students who conduct research. In return, researchers write project reports for dissemination through the Network. They also share their results with colleagues in at least one workshop or summer conference. The Network will also assist practitioners who want to participate in some form of action research but who do not choose to publish or present their work in exchange for a stipend.

The Adult Educators' Research Network has been in place since July 1991. The Network currently operates as an independent 353-funded staff development project. The Office of Adult Education encourages widespread participation in action research as a promising staff development approach. As its popularity increases over time, some functions of the Research Network may be positioned regionally to serve practitioners. To prepare for a move in this direction, the Research Network and the Centers for Development are presently available to train learning plan facilitators in action research methods.

Statewide Newsletter

The statewide newsletter has the effect of diminishing a practitioner's sense of isolation. The newsletter provides information generated from the state level as well as from within local programs. In an inquiry based system, practitioners use a newsletter to share significant learning project outcomes and to advertise the creation of new learning networks.

Currently, Virginia's adult education newsletter, Progress for Lifelong Learning, is disseminated quarterly to all practitioners. In addition to regular columns written by state adult education staff, the newsletter highlights special projects, provides a calendar of events, and includes two articles in each issue written by practitioners. These writers are paid $100 each for their articles. The newsletter invites practitioners to "advertise" their knowledge and skills for the benefit of colleagues and also to solicit information and advice on particular adult education issues from colleagues throughout the state.

Electronic Communication Link

Once established, a statewide adult education bulletin board will electronically link all practitioners. The computer network could be accessible in libraries, homes, schools and other work sites. An electronic bulletin board would include announcements, calendars of events, teaching tips, local and regional news items, project reports, and virtually any other adult education information. Most promising is the bulletin board's ability to engage practitioners in electronic dialogue with one another. Also, users of the system will have on-line access to the Adult Education and Literacy Resource Center holdings.

The Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Resource Center is working diligently to establish the electronic communication link. All the adult education resource centers throughout the southern region of the United States are interested in establishing similar capabilities. Therefore, the states are sharing their knowledge of various bulletin board software packages and cataloguing systems. Ideally this collaboration may lead to a unified system, allowing practitioners and resources to be linked throughout the southern states. Funding to establish the electronic communication link has been received through the State Resource Centers Grant awarded to Virginia by the U.S. Department of Education. Establishment of the bulletin board is targeted for 94-95.

State Resource Center

A state resource center provides vital support for all participants and activities in the staff development system. The Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Resource Center serves a varied clientele including adult education and literacy professionals, private companies, public agencies and adult learners. Practitioners typically borrow commercial and professional publications, videos, software, and other media from the Resource Center. Programs may also receive technical assistance in instruction, assessment, and evaluation. The State Resource Center will maintain the central computerized information data base and electronic bulletin board. Graduate research assistants respond to data collection needs of program administrators, policy makers, and practitioner researchers, and conduct literature searches when requested. Resource Center Associates who are adult education teachers evaluate

curriculum materials. The center operates a toll-free information hotline and referral service network serving practitioners and adult students. The Center coordinates the statewide GED on TV program, an alternative instructional delivery program designed to benefit independent, self-paced learners as well as those enrolled in local adult education programs. The Center produces the ABE Curricula Resource Catalog and the Learning Resources Evaluations Manual.

The Resource Center will be automating access to all holdings during 94-95. The electronic network is being developed and is scheduled to be implemented this year. Other functions are in place.

Summer Institutes

In an inquiry-based staff development system, planners of summer conferences will be able to respond to practitioner needs as expressed through learning plans. Summer institutes

- provide supportive environments for participants to share common interests and concerns
- showcase presenters with truly relevant and useful knowledge or experience
- connect practitioners with expertise
- balance direct imparting of new knowledge with opportunities for interaction, questioning, and contextualizing the information
- offer alternative low-risk formats such as poster sessions and round table discussions
- offer opportunities for practitioners to share action research projects and works in progress
- assign time for planning among local groups for ongoing projects, and
- recognize and support the need for networking and community building.

The Virginia Institutes for Lifelong Learning continue to be offered each summer in southeast Virginia, southwest Virginia, and northern Virginia. Each conference serves approximately 200 adult education practitioners and registration is on a first-come- first-served basis.

Management Development Institute

The Management Development Institute provides a forum to enhance management and leadership skills for adult education managers, planners and administrators through self-evaluation and self-directed learning.

The MDI project is currently comprised of ten practitioner-staffed action teams. Each action team leader has recruited a task force of adult education managers, coordinators, and planners to provide guidance, assistance, and support in each action area. The overall project is headed up by the Planning and Coordination team leader in collaboration with the other nine team leaders, a Department of Education liaison, a professional process consultant, and a representative of the Centers for Professional Development. Full implementation of the MDI is scheduled for July 1994.

Intensive Topic Institutes

Intensive topic institutes provide a means for practitioners with similar interests to establish strong collaborative networks. Two-day institutes could be offered during which practitioners come together in some central location, critically discuss the literature and research surrounding their particular topic, share experiences, and develop their own strategies and theories in a supportive environment. Institutes might accommodate up to 30 practitioners either on an invitational basis or on a first-come first-served basis. Trained facilitators would lead large and small group activities. Relationships developed during the institute could be maintained throughout the year via the electronic communication system established through the Resource Center.

Although a strong recommendation from the Staff Development Planning Team, current 353 staff development funding has not allowed for the creation of intensive topic institutes. The recommendation remains in the long-range plan for staff development and will be implemented as additional funds become available.

4. *Action: Incorporating a Philosophy*

Inquiry-Based Staff Development

The Staff Development Planning Team is optimistic that the various structures proposed for delivering staff development can effectively meet knowledge and skill development needs of adult educators. However, **in order for staff development to move the adult education field forward, *all* the support structures must operate from a coherent theoretical perspective;** a consistent shared philosophy must guide decision makers on all levels of the staff development system.

The inquiry-based philosophy proposed by Fingeret and Cockley, endorsed by the Staff Development Planning Team, and supported by the Office of Adult Education, can guide Virginia's adult educators to reshape work environments positively and dramatically. Within an inquiry-based system, **staff development becomes a program improvement process rather than primarily a means for individual growth.** This condition significantly enhances the entire adult education system's capacity to respond to the needs of adult learners.

Central to inquiry-based philosophy are staff development activities grounded in practitioners' knowledge and questions. Through various activities, practitioners acquire and generate knowledge within their own educational communities. The philosophy **does not disclaim any traditional staff development methods.** However, it requires participants to interact in nontraditional ways with knowledge, resources, and individuals within the system, and to interact differently with the system itself. It legitimizes the practitioner's role as a generator (not just a consumer) of knowledge and recognizes them as experts in their own right.

The following table describes some specific changes that might be experienced as a result of shifting to inquiry-based staff development. The table also helps to illustrate that the presence of structures (summer conferences, for instance) and the occurrence of activities (planning one's own learning, for instance) do not assure inquiry-based staff development. **The shift to be made is foremost one of perspective and must occur within individuals** before being evidenced in the larger system.

The Expert-Directed System	*The Inquiry-Based System*
*We tend to proceed as if knowledge were **constant**.* *We often take for granted that the content of training may be **applied in any adult education setting.***	In fact, what we know to be true is **always changing.** We can consider the notion that knowledge is contextual, socially-constructed, and influenced by our culture. New ideas can be **viewed critically** and placed in the context of our own experience. We can choose to recognize that what works for others may not make sense in our setting.
*Often during training, we **passively receive** information.*	As practitioners, we can **actively pursue** answers to questions that intrigue us, and in the process perhaps develop new knowledge. "Learning communities" that we create with colleagues provide a supportive and stimulating environment for this type of learning to occur.
*Training **attempts to fill perceived gaps** in our knowledge or skill areas. Sometimes it seems that we may be viewed as "empty vessels."*	The questions that arise from daily practice -- those things that puzzle or challenge us personally -- can be the impetus for professional development. We can pose these questions for action research or we can frame them for study through a learning plan. Regardless, the learning process can **begin with acknowledging what we already know about the subject, and then we can build upon that in a meaningful way.**
***Isolated workers tend to remain so**, coming together only sporadically for workshops or staff meetings.*	**Engaging in learning projects can reduce isolation**. Learning networks, established during learning plan development sessions, can inspire ongoing communication among practitioners. Electronic bulletin boards, accessible through libraries and schools, allow adult literacy practitioners to share problems, ideas, and solutions with others at any time. The Centers

	for Professional Development promote and support collaboration among professionals throughout Virginia who share similar learning goals.
Perspectives on adult literacy education often remain narrow *and may draw disproportionately on classroom experience within a particular program.*	**Perspectives are broadened.** The range of "legitimate" professional development activities is expanded to include classroom research, professional reading, visits to other program sites throughout Virginia, advocacy, participation on local or state level committees, advisory boards and task forces, curriculum development and other program improvement projects.
In training sessions, ***presenters disseminate*** *current theory, research and practices.*	In study groups and discussion sessions, **practitioners read and critically discuss adult education literature and research** including that produced by fellow practitioners via action research and other learning projects.
Economics and convenience drive staff development. Training events address needs that are ***common to the greatest number of people.*** *Workshops occur as* ***discrete episodes*** *of learning.*	Learning activities are **relevant to individuals.** This is because learning goals and strategies are decided individually or collaboratively among colleagues. Staff development dollars that once went for large group training may now also support incidental expenses generated through individual or team-developed learning plans. Individuals who once coordinated workshops might now facilitate the development of learning plans and then support, encourage, and inspire pursuit of those plans. Professional Development becomes a **continuous process** where goals evolve and change fluidly over time.
In isolation, *individuals determine whether or not they will implement new ideas or strategies acquired through training. Successes and struggles are a private matter.*	**In collaborative learning groups**, learning goals are made explicit. Peers continually challenge and support one another. Learners document their learning processes and outcomes. Sharing of learning is encouraged and supported. Plans to try out new ideas are deliberate and made explicit. Struggles are not viewed as

	failure, but are respected as contributions to the knowledge base.
*Workshops are the primary staff development method. Often, these are led by **content experts from "outside."***	Workshops continue to play a key role in our professional development. However, **practitioners are counted among the experts and achieve greater prominence as workshop leaders**. Also, workshops become just one learning resource among many. Content experts from outside our programs are still welcome and encouraged.
*The fact that few practitioners come to the field without formal training in adult education is viewed by some as a **significant problem to be fixed.***	The fact that people enter our field by different paths may be **one of our profession's greatest assets.** The diversity of knowledge, skills, interests and abilities brought to adult education by new practitioners provides valuable resources for continued learning. We acknowledge that this diversity among practitioners mirrors the diversity found among adult students who enter our programs and may afford us better resources for meeting their needs.
*Part-time teachers have **little time available beyond teaching hours** to participate in staff development activities.*	An inquiry-based system may provide a promising solution to this predicament. **Classrooms become the site for professional learning and students become collaborators in our learning projects**. We can choose to relate to our colleagues in new and different ways that enable regular sharing of ideas and information.
*Participants evaluate workshops at their conclusion. **Evaluation usually focuses on the degree to which the participants were "pleased" with the speaker, the refreshments, the handouts, the pacing of activities, etc. We rarely know if the training event impacted practice in any way.***	**With learning plans, we accumulate much richer evaluation data.** We also systematically collect more data than ever before about how staff development impacts practice. Staff development has a much greater chance of positively influencing practice since learning goals are selected by the practitioner based on issues that are personally signficant. The practitioner determines the criteria and the means for evaluating learning at the same time that goals are set. Practitioners document their learning throughout the entire process. Often, learning takes place right in the classroom with

	students as active participants. The practitioner is the primary evaluator of his or her own learning but may also want to involve others. **Evaluation in staff development, as in any other arena, should focus on an original goal. In the case of learning plans, the original goal is always, of course, to learn something.** Enhanced student achievement may result from our learning. However, many complex factors impact student achievement in addition to staff development. For this reason, staff development *informs* our evaluation of student progress but should not be used to *define* student progress. Attempts to trace a direct cause and effect relationship in this way predispose *any* staff development system for failure.
Administrators determine appropriate staff development activities *based on their perceptions of practitioner learning needs.*	Administrators still play an important role in exposing practitioners to information and ideas through training. In an inquiry-based system, however, **practitioners also become involved in determining staff development activities.** They develop learning plans or research projects that address unique interests and concerns. When reviewing learning plans, administrators gain new insight into what practitioners view to be important issues in adult education. Administrators and peers can h elp practitioners clarify learning goals and identify useful resources and strategies. If a learning plan seems inconsistent with the overall mission or broadly stated program goals, the learning plan may need to be *renegotiated* between the practitioner and the administrator.

5. *Action: Involving Others*

Partnerships, Networking, and Coalition Building

The necessity for collaboration in staff development can be based upon the premise that there is no one person or group who can embody all the needed qualities or perform all the tasks necessary for effective staff development. This leads to our efforts to not only share the leadership and responsibilities of delivering staff development services but also to provide incentives so that all stakeholders, both individuals and agencies, assume the roles of guiding and directing the practice of staff development in the Commonwealth.

This collaboration can be best facilitated by creating a structure and process which is inclusive of all stakeholders and has the capacity of informing itself. We must utilize existing collaborative structures and create new ones when necessary. The process we speak of includes posing problems, defining issues, and assessing needs through these structures and opening the door to alternative solutions and outcomes. **The Virginia Council for Adult Education and Literacy** is an example of an existing collaborative structure which will contribute to facilitating such efforts among state agencies and organizations as well as encouraging similar efforts on the local level.

Staff development for adult education impacts other education and training services and functions (e.g. the Department of Correctional Education, Governor's Employment and Training Department, the Department of Education) and therefore requires that coordination and collaboration become the bases for staff development program implementation. The Council for Adult Education and Literacy will serve as the vehicle for this collaboration. It is anticipated that this will serve as an **impetus for effective staff development at the local level** in the following ways:

- establishes a vehicle for communicating effectively at the state and local levels
- creates a means of balancing the unity and diversity of each stakeholder
- provides a forum for setting and implementing mutual roles, goals, and norms applicable to staff development.

Involving Others *(continued)*

- establishes an atmosphere of trust
- fosters sound decision making
- assists in obtaining necessary resources
- allows stakeholders to influence and empower each other

The basic rationale for promoting collaboration is to emphasize staff development's animating and unifying vision. Only through communication and full participation among stakeholders may we successfully respond to the staff development needs of adult educators in the Commonwealth.

6. *Action: Choices and Challenges*

Inquiry-based staff development, as described throughout this report, lends enormous potential to adult education in Virginia. A **successful** shift to inquiry-based staff development requires that all participants, from adult students to policymakers, accept certain challenges.

Challenge to adult students:

- Become a professional development resource for adult educators.
- Share your experiences and insights about teaching and learning.
- Inquire along with teachers into issues that puzzle or challenge you as an adult learner.

Challenge to teachers, aides, volunteers, and GED examiners:

- Actively and deliberately engage in an ongoing learning process. Begin by reflecting on your practice and what you already know to be true. Identify questions that puzzle or challenge you and build upon your knowledge and experience to make new discoveries.
- Utilize as many resources as possible considering yourself, your colleagues, and your adult students as experts.
- Contribute in any way that you can to creating a work environment where all knowledge and experience is valued and ongoing learning is both an expectation and a norm.
- Avail yourself as a resource to colleagues. Share the knowledge you gain through inquiry with as large an audience as you can. Collaborate.
- Use new knowledge to influence positive change in your classroom or larger program.

Choices and Challenges *(continued)*

Challenge to program administrators and regional specialists:

- Support the ongoing use of learning plans and action research for professional development.
- Act as a facilitator of professional learning plans within your program or designate someone who can assume this critical role.
- Rethink traditional uses of time so that teachers may collaborate on learning projects, share ideas, and provide support.
- Develop means to reward teachers for their learning and find ways for them to share their learning with other audiences.
- Provide special recognition for practitioners whose learning has resulted in positive change among learners or within the larger program.
- Make your ongoing professional learning obvious to those with whom you work. Draw on the knowledge that exists among your staff as a resource for your own learning.
- Develop collaborative learning projects with teachers and inquire alongside them.

Challenge to policy-makers:

- Affirm the potential offered adult education through inquiry-based staff development. Develop policies that enable program administrators to effectively support ongoing learning among practitioners within programs.
- Work towards enhancing the professional status of adult educators as exhibited by full and part-time contracts, benefits, and higher pay.
- Develop collaborative inter-agency relationships to enhance support for staff development activities. Expand resources so that staff development does not rely solely on federal funding.

References

Fingeret, H., & Cockley, S., (1992). Teachers' Learning: An evaluation of ABE staff development in Virginia. Dayton: The Virginia Adult Educators' Research Network.

Lytle, S. L., Belzer, A., & Reumann, R. (1992). Invitations to inquiry: Rethinking staff development in adult literacy education. (Technical Report TR92-2). Philadelphia: National Center on Adult Literacy.

Pelavin Associates, Inc. with San Francisco State University and Adult Learning Resource Center. Study of ABE/ESL instructor training approaches: Key elements of adult education teacher and volunteer training programs. Washington, DC: Pelavin Associates, 1991.

Appendix A.

Staff Development Planning Team

Rebecca Betz
Hampton City Literacy Program
Hampton, Virginia

Nina Mae Blackburn
Literacy Council of Metro Richmond
Richmond, Virginia

Barbara Blount
Sussex Adult Basic Education
Wakefield, Virginia

Nancy Breeding
United Way of Southwest Virginia
Lebanon, Virginia

Alan Brittle
LVA of Roanoke Valley
Roanoke, Virginia

Jenean Case
Newport News Public Schools
Continuing Education
Newport News, Virginia

Suzanne Cockley
Virginia Adult Educators' Research Network
Dayton, Virginia

Nell Coffey
The Pride Center
Lynchburg, Virginia

Laura Draim
Dayton Learning Center
Dayton, Virginia

Susan Erno
Charlottesville Public Schools
Adult Education Center
Charlottesville, Virginia

Donna Gathright
Department of Correctional Education
Virginia Correctional Center for Women
Goochland, Virginia

Ed Jones
George Mason University
Fairfax, Virginia

Susan Joyner
Fairfax County Public Schools
Adult ESL
Falls Church, Virginia

Joan Kushnir
Dowell J. Howard Vocational Center
Winchester, Virginia

Samuel Lapkin
Henrico County Public Schools
Glen Allen, Virginia

Deborah Lowe
Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education
Abingdon, Virginia

Elaine Marolla
Adult Career Development Center
Richmond, Virginia

Deborah McDaniel
Southside Virginia Community College
Keysville, Virginia

Lennox McLendon
Virginia Department of Education
Office of Adult Education
Richmond, Virginia

Rebecca Moak
Virginia Department of Education
Office of Adult Education
Richmond, Virginia

Paula Mullins
Regional Adult Education Program
Gate City, Virginia

Susan Otero
Arlington Education and Employment Program
Arlington, Virginia

Victor Penzer
Virginia Literacy Foundation
Office of Training for Volunteer Literacy Providers

Susan Russell
Northern Neck Adult Education
White Stone, Virginia

Annette Sanger
Regional Adult Education
Spotsylvania, Virginia

Lynn Day Sharp
New River Community College
Adult Education Program
Dublin, Virginia

Judy Singh
Virginia Commonwealth University
Cluster Inservice and Literacy Training Project
Richmond, Virginia

Mary Walker
Eastern Shore Community College
Melfa, Virginia

Carter White
Department of Correctional Education
Richmond, Virginia

Minda Willinger
Literacy Council of Northern Virginia
Falls Church, Virginia

Other Project Consultants:

Alisa Belzer
Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Project
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Hanna Fingeret
Literacy South
Raleigh, North Carolina

Diane Foucar-Szocki
DFS Associates
Harrisonburg, Virginia

Judy Taylor
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia